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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000256

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TAGS: PGOV PINR PREL UG SU

SUBJECT: "COLD PEACE" -- SUDAN AND UGANDA FIND COMMON GROUND

REF: A. A. 02 KAMPALA 01153

¶B. B. 03 KHARTOUM 813

¶C. C. 05 KAMPALA 2652

Classified By: POL: Michael Honigstein for reasons Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Until recently, relations between Sudan and Uganda had been marked by mutual suspicion and aggression through proxy forces. Uganda was a major supporter of the SPLM throughout the 20-year civil war, and Sudan countered this influence by providing weapons and bases to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). In 2003, Sudan ended open support to the LRA and began working with the Ugandan army to end the LRA threat. Sudan has been able to leverage cooperation over the LRA into a stronger bilateral relationship with Uganda. In international organizations, Uganda has started to vote with Sudan, or at least to abstain. This "cold peace" (ref A), however, may not outlast the cooperation over the LRA.

¶2. (C) Opinions differ about the exact nature of the current relationship between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the LRA. The SAF and the Ugandan People's Defense Force (UPDF) have mounted a number of successful joint operations against the LRA. However, these operations have not been decisive, and the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) is convinced that the SAF, or other northern intelligence organs, continue to support the LRA. While these claims remain unsubstantiated, some lingering LRA support from northern Sudanese elements is possible. End Summary.

Insurgency Quid Pro Quo

¶3. (U) Southern Sudan has been closely linked to Uganda since pre-colonial times. The border between them is a European construct, and on several occasions, the British even considered merging Equatoria with Uganda. These tight cultural, historical, political, and commercial links continue to this day, with several ethnic groups spread across both sides of the border. In recent history, this has translated into strong Ugandan support for the SPLM since its inception. During the war, Uganda provided significant amounts of advice, money, and weapons to the SPLA. To counter this influence, and to contribute to general instability in the south, the Government of Sudan (GoS) began providing similar support to the LRA. The GoS allowed the LRA to establish bases along the Ugandan border, and the SAF conducted joint operations with the LRA against the SPLA.

¶3. (C) In 2002, during a general ceasefire between the SAF and the SPLA, Sudan and Uganda negotiated an agreement to end GoS support to the LRA and allow the UPDF to conduct limited operations in the Sudan against the LRA. This agreement has been renewed and modified several times and remains in effect. However, the Sudanese now admit that they continued to secretly support the LRA until the civil war ended in 2005.

It's the LRA

¶4. (C) Since the signing of the CPA last year, the SAF has stepped up its efforts to capture or kill LRA troops in the South, often working in conjunction with UPDF and SPLA forces. The SAF also claims that it has now completely ended its support to the LRA. The GoSS, however, believes that the North continues to provide significant support to the LRA. The LRA remains the most serious security threat in the South, despite the attempts to eradicate it.

¶5. (C) The following is from a 2003 cable on the relationship between the GoS and the LRA (ref B): SUDAN "WANTS TO GET RID OF (JOSEPH) KONY BY ANY MEANS." HE (then Foreign Minister Ismail Mustafa) PROMISED THAT THE GOS WILL GIVE THE UGANDAN ARMY ANY HELP SO THEY CAN "LIQUIDATE HIM." IF THAT IS NOT POSSIBLE, THEN THE GOS WILL PROVIDE POLITICAL SUPPORT IF THE GOU WISHES IT. ISMAIL SAID THAT SOME LOW LEVEL SUDANESE MILITARY "OF THE SAME TRIBE AS KONY" MAY PROVIDE SOME SUPPORT TO THE LRA. BUT IF THE GOS FINDS SUCH OFFICERS, THEY WILL BE DEALT WITH. It is notable that Sudan, which was supporting the LRA at the time, is making almost the exact statements today.

Commercial Trade Strong

¶6. (U) In the south, Uganda is playing a key role in economic development as trade expands. Since the opening of the road from Uganda, the markets of Juba have been flooded with Ugandan goods. Traditionally reliant on products from

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the North, which arrive by plane or barge, the appearance of trucked-in imports from Uganda has led to an increase in the variety of goods available and a significant drop in prices. While small in terms of overall Sudanese imports, these products are critical for the economic growth in the South.

¶7. (U) The open roads have also started to bring refugees back to Sudan. Thousands of Sudanese, many of whom have been living in Uganda for over twenty years, have either returned or have said they want to return. While UNHCR has yet to sign a tripartite agreement to begin organized repatriation, the spontaneous returns have already begun. It is estimated that over 200,000 of the Sudan's 550,000 refugees live in Uganda.

Comment

¶8. (C) The LRA will continue to dominate the bilateral agenda between the two nations as long as they operate in the south and remain a security threat. The GoSS claims that the SAF is still giving extensive support to the LRA. The DLO in Khartoum has yet to verify any of these claims and in many cases has refuted them. However, it is possible that the SAF, or other northern intelligence elements, do provide at least some support to the LRA. Joseph Kony, leader of the LRA, remains at large and, by most accounts, in Sudan.

¶9. (U) Since 2003, after many years of animosity and negative voting, the Sudanese have been able to garner Ugandan votes -- or at least abstentions - at the UN in New York and on the Human Rights Commission. However, there are indications that this cooperation has limits. During Sudan's recent efforts to head the AU, Uganda did not openly oppose Sudan's candidacy, but they did not support it either. The absence of the Ugandan head of state at the AU Summit was noted and resented by the Sudanese. As the issue of Nile waters becomes more prominent, Sudan will look to Uganda for more support and cooperation.

¶10. (U) Uganda was one of only two nations (with Kenya) to send a high-level delegation to the celebration of the CPA Anniversary in Juba, and the only country to send a senior member of the current government (the First Vice President). The Sudanese in both the north and south believe that if Southern Sudan decides to secede in 2011, Uganda would immediately become the closest ally of the new nation.

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